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OT 521 CRITICAL INTRODUCTION TO PROPHETS AND WRITINGS

Spring 2001—A Three Hour Course Instructor: Lawson G. Stone

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Course Aspirations and Place in the Curriculum

Aspirations: As the direct continuation of OT 520, OT 521 contributes to students' preparation for ministry by providing selected tools fundamental to responsible interpretation of the OT. Although this course does *not* offer a comprehensive approach or emphasize direct textual study, it *enhances* both by developing a framework within which competent interpretation can take place. The course focuses on Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings (the "Former Prophets"), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and The Twelve (the "Latter Prophets"), and the anthology of material known as the "writings." Students explore contemporary approaches to the literary character, historical and cultural setting, composition, authorship, and literary characteristics of these books, their various literary types, settings, and functions, and how these affect Christian reading of the OT. Realizing these aspirations requires that students:

1. *Read* overviews of the major trends in contemporary OT interpretation;
2. Discover how a close reading of the OT itself stimulates the *questions* that modern OT interpreters try to answer;
3. See how a knowledge of *Hebrew* and the OT's *literary character* enhance OT interpretation;
4. Briefly identify the *essential* historical and cultural setting of each of the books, major traditions, and outstanding personages of these portions of the OT;
5. Describe the *background, concepts, and procedures* of selected methods of interpretation: archeology, textual criticism, philological analysis, source criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, certain contemporary literary approaches.
6. Become conversant with selected concrete interpretative concepts regarding selected *specific passages and literary types* and with representative models explaining the *composition and character of* the prophets and writings;
7. Identify how critical interpretation *complements, informs, and sometimes conflicts* with evangelical commitment to the OT as God's word. Specifically, how we see the:
 - a. The OT's *diversity* in the context of our recognition of its *unity*;
 - b. *Compositional processes* behind the OT in light of our belief in its *literary integrity*;
 - c. *Historical criticism* in light of our confidence in the *historicity* of the OT;
 - d. *Human processes* by which the OT became scripture in light of belief in *divine inspiration*;
 - e. *Culturally conditioned* character of the OT in the light of our belief in its *eternal applicability*;
8. Identify, clarify, and strengthen essential *convictions* regarding *biblical authority and theology*;

9. Continuing discovering serious study as a means of spiritual growth, seeing our work as:
 - a. "Studying to show ourselves approved unto God, workers who need not be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth;" (2 Tim. 2:15)
 - b. Exploring practically how to love God with all our *mind*. (Matt. 22:37));

The instructor prays this course fosters theological, intellectual, and spiritual revival at ATS.

Place in the Curriculum: OT 521 assumes familiarity with the content of the OT, the general history of Israel, and the methods of OT study as presented in OT 520.

Means of Realizing Course Aspirations

READING in the literature of OT studies from many perspectives, from "mainstream" (i.e. non-conservative) OT criticism as well as evangelical scholars. Some readings *are difficult* and not always *obviously* relevant to, say, sermon preparation or youth ministry. Reading reports are due on the last day of a particular unit, per the schedule below. Failure to complete readings on time will result in a reduction of the final grade by a degree (B+>B) for each late report.

READING RESOURCES

Anthony F. Campbell, Mark A. O'Brien, *Unfolding th Deuteronomistic History*. Fortress.

Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel*, Revise and Enlarged, Westminster/John Knox.

Bernhard W. Anderson, *Out of the Depths: The Psalms Speak for Us Today*. Westminster/John Knox.

Required Access to Reference Materials: You will sometimes need to use one of the following multi-volume Bible encyclopedia sets. This will be indicated on the essay assignment sheet. No substitutes are permitted. You do not have to own these, but they are a worthy addition to your library. Often one or the other is available in public libraries. The Asbury Bookstore can facilitate purchase should you wish to do so, as well as other dealers in theological books.

The Anchor Bible Encyclopedia. New York: Doubleday, 1992. 6 Volumes. Also available on CD-ROM for Windoze or PowerPC Macs running a Wintel emulation program .

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised Edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979-1988. 4 Volumes.

Recommended Bibliographical Resource: Bauer, David. *Biblical Resources for Ministry*. Wilmore, Revised 2nd Edition, 1995.

CLASS LECTURES do not directly expound readings, but supplement and analyze key issues, presenting the instructor's analysis of the interpretative problems and proposals for each unit studied. Lecture materials, such as handouts, powerpoint files, etc. will be in my lecture folder on the intranet *after* a given section of lecture is complete, not beforehand.

Four Open Book/Notes Essays will be assigned, each of which will be 1200-1600 words. These papers will be practicum exercises in which students will work with a passage of scripture or

problem of biblical interpretation posed by the instructor in the light of specific issues focused in class. Students may consult class notes and textbooks, but no other sources, for writing these essays. These are to represent your *very best thought and work*. Essays are to be the student's own work and students are asked not to consult, give, or receive any advice in conjunction with these essays.

The essay topic and instructions will be posted on the Intranet "lectures" folder 2 weeks before it is due, per the schedule below. They will not be distributed in class. Assignments will be in the form of Microsoft Word documents, which can be read on any workstation on campus and printed out.

Grade Calculation: Essays will be given letter grades, exams will have numerical grades. They all contribute together toward your final grade in the following proportions. Note they increase through the term, so that a weak early performance can often be compensated for by harder work on subsequent essays:

Essay 1 -----	20%
Essay 2 -----	25%
Essay 3 -----	25%
Essay 4 -----	30%

Essays may be submitted two ways. First, you can print it out, double-spaced, with 1" margins, and submit it on the due date by 5:00 PM in class, or to my office. Comments and grade will be written on the paper and it will be returned via the SPO.

Second, work may be submitted electronically. At this time, I can only accept work produced on Microsoft Word, not Word Perfect, Works, or any other word processing program (Mac or Windoze is fine). If you can submit a document in MS Word, there are several advantages to you. *First, submission is easier.* Just attach your document to an e-mail and send it to me via your ATS FirstClass free e-mail account. NOTE: I cannot support any other e-mail system than FirstClass due to complications, especially with AOL, in how attachments are handled. No submissions on disk, please. A second advantage is that I will place my comments and grade on your paper via MS Word's "Comments" feature, which allows direct commenting on a document. I then return your paper via an E-mail attachment and you open it in MS Word and you'll see some words are highlighted. Placing your mouse pointer over the highlighted word will reveal the comment.

The advantage here is that when I comment papers by hand, it is a slow process and I tend to write less. When I'm typing comments directly into a paper, I can write much more quickly so I tend to write more, and the result is that *you receive more feedback on your paper* than if I had to write them by hand.

While I prefer to get work submitted electronically, the traditional hard-copy approach is still viable and acceptable.

Office Hours will be announced, but you are welcome at any time to call or e-mail me with a question or to make an appointment. I will also be dining in the ATS cafeteria on Tuesday evenings, and you are invited to join me at anytime if you wish.

Schedule of General Subjects and Due Dates for Reading

Unit One: The Former Prophets

Feb. 7-Mar 16

Read: Campbell and O'Brien

Essay One Due March 2

Unit Two: The Latter Prophets

Mar. 21-Apr. 20

Read: Blenkinsopp

Essay Two Due Mar 23

Essay Three Due Apr. 20

Unit Three: The Writings

Apr. 25-May 11

Read: Anderson

Note: Lecture will cover more than Psalms

Essay Four Due Tuesday, May 15, 3:30-5:30 (final exam period)